

**COMMUNITY FIRST'S  
DIRECTORY OF SERVICES 2008/9**

**ACCESS & SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- **Community Transport**  
*Liam Tatton-Bennett*
- **Wheels to Work**  
*Helen Lines*
- **Link Project**  
*Marion Mason*
- **Credit Unions**  
*Sarah Perkins*

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

- **Community Development**  
*Marion Rayner*
- **Community Involvement**  
*Lesley Taylor*
- **Local Councils**  
*Katie Fielding*
- **Rural Housing Enabler**  
*Carol Southall*
- **Village Halls Adviser**  
*John Dowsett*
- **Wiltshire Community Web**  
*Sharon Leney*

**YOUTH SERVICES**

- **Youth Services**  
*Steve Crawley*
- **Young Carers**  
*Victoria Clare*

**RURAL REGENERATION**

- **Sustain the Plain**  
*John Dowsett*
- **Grants Programme**  
*Gillian Barber*

**RURAL ENTERPRISE**

- **Village Shops**  
*Tim Coomer*
- **Enterprise Development**  
*David Beaton*

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

During the past year Community First has been honoured by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, formerly Patron of Youth Action Wiltshire, agreeing to become Patron of Community First. We also have four new vice presidents to support and encourage the work of the charity, and they are all very welcome.

Community First's statement of purpose sets our aim as "working to improve the quality of life and economic well being of people throughout Wiltshire and Swindon". In this spirit we have embarked on several new programmes.

**Plain Action Grant Programme**

Launched in April this year, its aim is to promote the economic development of communities around Salisbury Plain. With the super garrison being built in the east of the county the programme will promote the integration of the civilian and military populations.

**Project Inspire**

Through YAW, we have now appointed our inclusion worker Rob Guy who will lead the project: twenty-four NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) young people have accessed the summer programme.

Project plans have been drawn up and bids are being made for the following:

**Taste Wiltshire**

A project to provide a distribution centre for local food. This will help local producers to get their goods to market, as well as allow all of us to buy fresh, local food that has not had to travel long distances.

**Village Agents**

We are working with partners to set up a pilot programme to assess whether it is feasible to establish a network of village agents in rural communities. They would be a source of information about rural services, and would assist vulnerable and disadvantaged people to gain the help they need.

We have also been working alongside Voluntary Action Swindon (VAS) with a view to merging our two charities which have similar aims and objectives and ways of working. This will mean that Community First services can be delivered in the Swindon Borough area with the local knowledge and entrée provided by VAS.

We are also building a relationship with the new Wiltshire Council established this year, to work in partnership to deliver services to the communities of Wiltshire.

In November this year the Board of Trustees will elect a new Chairman, and my three years in the post will end. It has been a challenging and fruitful time, and I am proud to have been asked to lead a group of trustees who have expertise and commitment to the work of Community First. I thank them all. I also thank the Chief Executive and all the staff for their loyalty and hard work. To our partners, members and friends I offer thanks and ask that you keep up your support in the years to come for the very worthwhile work that is going on at Community First.

Jane Grant  
*Chairman of the Board of Trustees*



**COMMUNITY  
FIRST**

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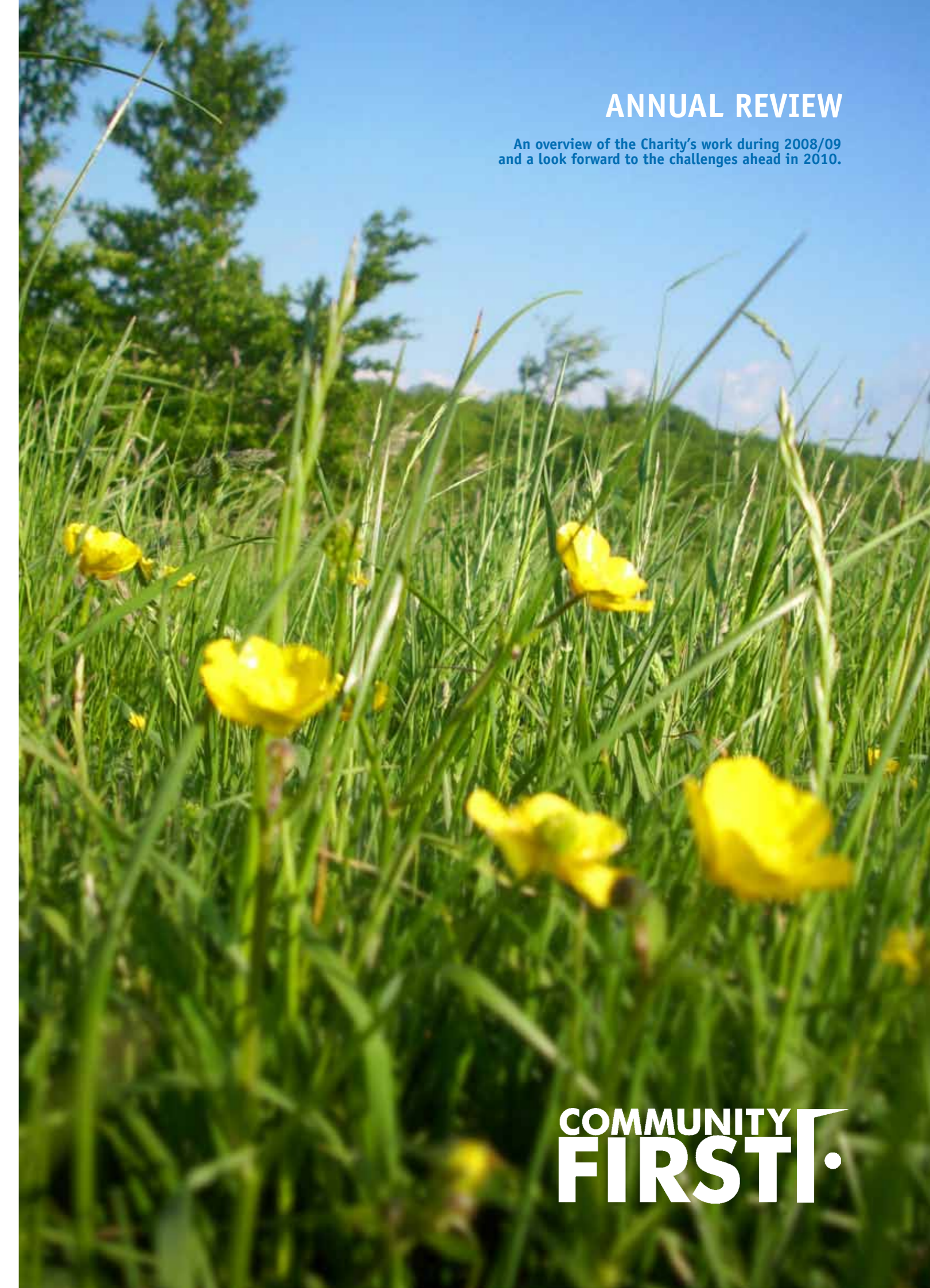
Registered Charity No: 288117.  
VAT Registration No: 639 3860 06.  
Company Limited by Guarantee Reg. No: 1757334 England.  
Registered with the Financial Services Authority No: FRN311971

Member of the ACRE network of Rural Community Councils

Photos: Steve Crawley, Helie Franklin, Helen Lines, Sheila Martin  
Designed & printed by [www.hawksheaddesign.co.uk](http://www.hawksheaddesign.co.uk)

**ANNUAL REVIEW**

An overview of the Charity's work during 2008/09 and a look forward to the challenges ahead in 2010.



**COMMUNITY  
FIRST**

*"Recession, merger and a new unitary authority were the defining characteristics of the year. Community First looks forward to a more effective and sustainable future with the new Wiltshire Council as a valued partner and funder for the benefit of Wiltshire's communities."*

Philippa Read  
*Chief Executive*

Recession, merger and a new unitary authority have been the defining characteristics of 2008/09 which has meant a focus on efficiency and effectiveness for the charity.

Community First began the year finalising the transfer of assets, liabilities and activities of Youth Action Wiltshire to complete the merger of the two organisations and the integration of services for young people into the portfolio of Community First.

Both charities were given the approval of their membership at AGMs in October and completed the charity de-registration of Youth Action Wiltshire in January to fully merge the two into one. It is a credit to both Boards of Trustees that they had the foresight to take this innovative step that brings together our two distinct areas of expertise. This puts us at the cutting edge of community and youth work development across Wiltshire and Swindon thus making us more effective and sustainable.

During the year we have begun work to put YAW services onto a more sustainable footing and have grown those services for young people, employing new staff to support voluntary youth clubs with a wide range of activities and increasing support to Young Carers. We ended the year with a successful bid to Wiltshire Council for £375,000 for a three year programme of support to young people not in employment, education, or training.

As we entered 2008 the impacts of the Credit Crunch and recession were beginning to bite at the heels of local people, their communities and the delivery of services to meet their needs. This was true for voluntary, public and private sectors as a whole and Community First with local partners contributed to the Wiltshire Assembly's report, The Impact of the Credit Crunch in Wiltshire, that looked at the complexities and scale of the resulting problems and the actions required to try and address them for the future.

The voluntary sector has been hit on two conflicting counts; a greater demand for services and a significant drop in funding. Community First has not been immune from this seeing increasing demand for services such as the Link Good Neighbour scheme, Wiltshire Money Line, Credit Union support, Wheels to Work and rural retail advice. At the same time funding for both Wheels to Work and the Rural Retail Advisory Service has been cut and new sources of funding difficult to find.

However on the basis that a crisis is too good to waste Community First has taken the opportunity to look to efficiencies, transfer the skills of staff to support other services, use the knowledge, skills and experience of staff to take advantage of one-off consultancy contracts to build on their expertise and balance the budget. We aim to come through this period with a stronger, highly skilled team that is flexible in its approach to meeting the needs and aspirations of local communities.

The 31st of March 2009 saw the closing of the doors of Wiltshire's four district councils and the dawn of 1st April brought a new unitary Wiltshire Council into being. Community First looks forward to working with Wiltshire Council as a valued partner and funder for the benefit of Wiltshire communities.

Philippa Read  
Chief Executive

Community First has greatly expanded its services, skills and community activities over the past year. The merger with Youth Action Wiltshire has enabled us to extend our reach into rural community youth services and new community support services are being developed to respond to the needs of our rural communities. Like most years at Community First, 2008/09 was one of challenge, variety and innovation and this can be seen in some of our "year's highlights" from a selection of our services.

#### HRH PATRON

Community First was delighted when HRH The Duchess of Cornwall agreed to become the first Patron of the charity. The Duchess has been an active and supportive patron of Youth Action Wiltshire for a number of years and agreed to extend her patron's role to Community First following the merger of the charities. Her Royal Highness has a great interest in supporting both the youth work and enterprising rural services in Wiltshire. Her patronage reflects Community First's charity role in these areas and we look forward to working with The Duchess over the coming years.



#### COMMUNITY LED PLANNING

In the run up to the new Wiltshire Council, Community First has been working alongside local authority partners across the county to support the start up of new community area partnerships where none currently exist. Interest in parish plans grows and reached a new milestone in 2008 when 20% of parishes in Wiltshire & Swindon had completed or are now preparing a parish plan. Community planning does not just involve adults and youth involvement work is being undertaken in several small communities.

#### DR. STUART BURGESS

In June Community First was delighted to host Dr. Stuart Burgess on his fact finding visit to Wiltshire. Dr. Burgess is Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities and Rural Advocate reporting direct to the Prime Minister on the key issues affecting rural communities. Dr. Burgess visited many rural Wiltshire communities and met with local groups to discuss the key issues of rural housing, village shops, local economic development and post office closures. There was also time for a detour to visit Pewsey School and meet with the Head Teacher and students to ask their views of life in rural Wiltshire.



#### WILTSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Community First continues to strengthen its work in supporting 250 local parish and town councils across the county, providing expert secretariat, legal and administrative advice to ensure smooth and effective local governance. One of the highlights of the year was Urchfont Parish Council achieving the Quality Status Certificate, a national quality standards award and being presented with its certificate by the Chair of the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils.

#### YOUTH SERVICES

The merger of Youth Action Wiltshire has brought a whole new dimension to Community First's community involvement work with expansion into youth development services and exciting opportunities for existing services integration and community inter-generational working. The work to support rural youth through the development of local youth clubs and community based activities, continues to strengthen and to provide opportunities for training and accreditation. It also allows young people to meet together locally through organised sport, leisure and craft activities and to access new experiences such as archery, team sports, cycling, fishing, arts and canoeing.



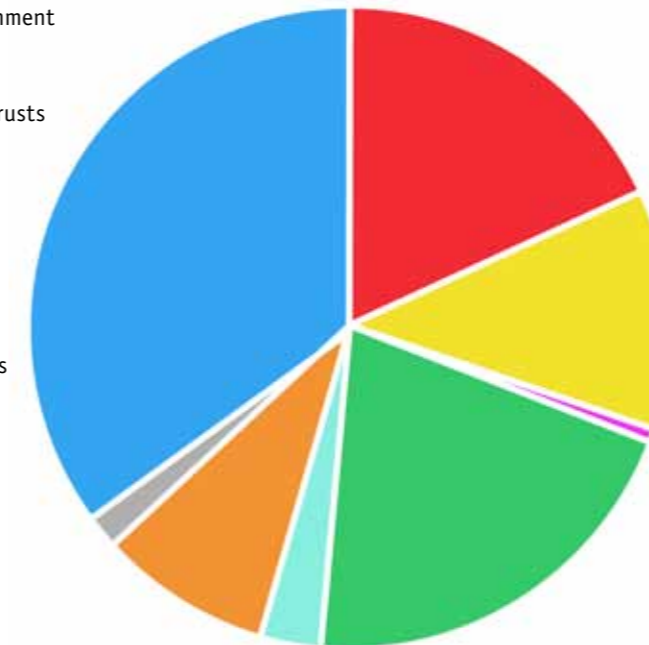
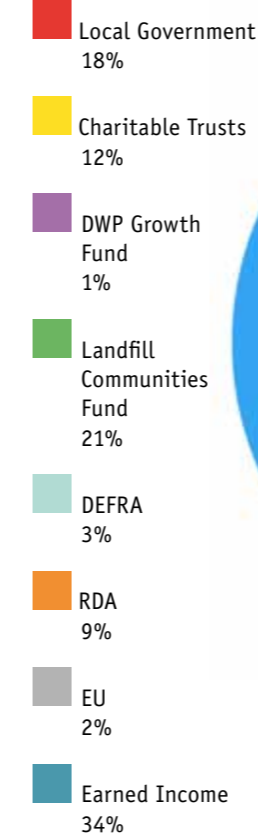
#### YOUNG CARERS

Young Carers is a highly respected service that has provided "time out" support, mentoring and help to 700 of Wiltshire's young carers – young people who undertake additional caring responsibilities in the home due to parental disability, illness or perhaps suffering substance abuse. This responsibility can often leave the young carer socially isolated from their peers, cause problems with school work or lead to illness. The service provides respite opportunities for young carers to meet together, to share and enjoy normal leisure activities and to receive expert help and guidance.



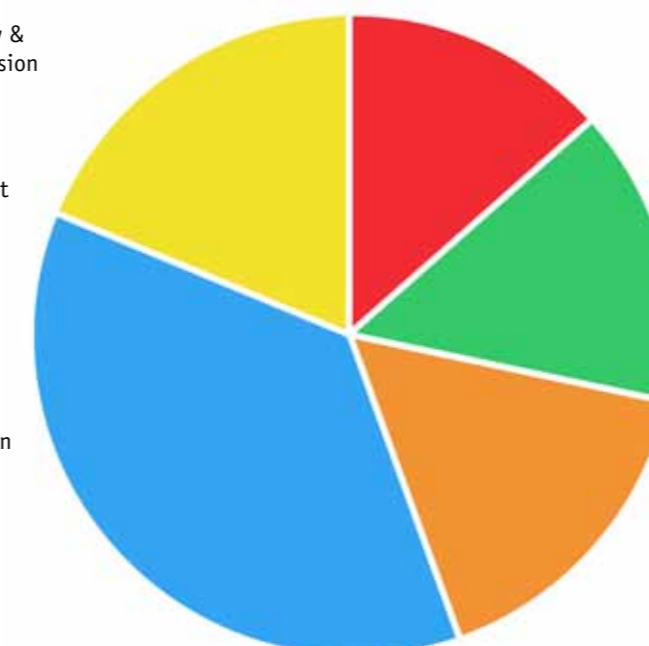
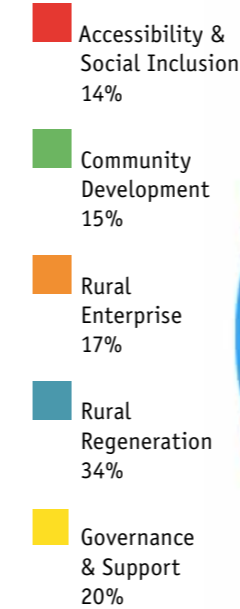
#### TOTAL INCOME FOR 2008/09

Shown in percentage



#### TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2008/09

Shown in percentage



#### JAPANESE VISIT

In early Spring 2008, Community First played host once again to a research delegation from the Tohoku Regional Development Centre from Japan. They were interested to learn more about local community empowerment and in particular parish planning and community development. The Tohoku region is very similar to the South West of England in terms of its rurality, economy and demographics and the Japanese are keen to decentralise their existing governance approach to one that is more locally focused. Marion Rayner and her Community Development team at Community First, organised a week of community visits and local stakeholder forums. The delegation declared themselves highly satisfied with what they had learned from their visit.



#### WHEELS TO WORK



Since it was launched in the summer of 2006, the Community First Wheels to Work project has provided supported access to independent moped transport for over 200 young people across Wiltshire. The project continues to exceed its objectives and almost 70% of those entering the scheme, have continued with their employment or work based training after the six-month moped lease has finished. Plans are underway to develop a "wheels to learning" programme. This will respond to the need to provide similar transport support for those on short term work placements or those attending skills training.

#### FIT TOGETHER

2008 saw the launch of the Fit Together project which aims to promote a more active, healthier and fitter lifestyle, focusing on those who do not engage in regular exercise. It does so by making exercise more accessible in rural communities and through outreach to existing "untapped" audiences in residential care homes and sheltered housing, gain improved access to leisure centres. Exercise activities include Tai Chi, walking and strolling clubs, aerobics classes, offering trained and expert coaches who can deliver in residential homes, sports or village halls in the local community. The objective of the project is to improve the health, fitness and well-being for those who do not normally have access to exercise opportunities and to provide it in a fun, sociable and safe environment.

